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JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CO-OPERATIVE ADVANCE IN HOME MISSIONS

**Made to the Home Mission Boards of the various denominations
by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in
America and the Home Missions Council.**

Origin.

A Joint Committee was formed in the Spring of 1909, composed of the Committee on Home Missions of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and a Special Committee appointed for the purpose by the Home Missions Council. It will be remembered that the Federal Council was organized by the specific and formal action of 32 denominations acting as entire denominational bodies, composed of sixteen million communicants, and that the Home Missions Council is a combination of the Home Mission Boards and Officers of 15 communions, including all the larger denominations. This Joint Committee consists of 40 representative men from 21 denominational bodies.

The Federal Council instructed its Home Mission Committee, in co-operation with the Special Committee of the Home Missions Council, to make a public pronouncement as to the need and desirability of co-operation on Home Mission fields.

In view of the fact that loose talk is common concerning denominational overlapping, with no careful co-ordination of facts underneath the talk, the Joint Committee deemed it wise, first of all, to make a careful investigation of facts in the case; and secondly, before issuing any public statements, to present facts and conclusions to the responsible Boards, that they may take such action as will put the whole matter in an encouraging instead of a disheartening light before the public—may, in fact, furnish positive inspiration.

Findings.

The practical questions are two, the first being much more insistent because much more manageable than the second.

Are there Home Mission fields which are being neglected by all?

Are there Home Mission fields where there is needless duplication of effort?

Off-hand observation on the subject is easy. Scientific investigation of the facts is extremely difficult. There ought to be a basis of wide and careful induction. As a beginning in this direction the Federal Council, at the suggestion of the Joint Committee, has taken one State in the very centre of the West, Colorado, and through a Special Secretary, Rev. O. F. Gardner, located for

the time in Denver, has left no stone unturned to get at the bottom facts in the case. On a blank prepared by the Joint Committee, and with the co-operation of the State Superintendents of the various Home Mission Boards, church statistics were obtained directly from the fields. These were verified in three ways: (a) by denominational year books; (b) by a census just taken by the Colorado State Sunday School Association; (c) by the Bulletin of Religious Bodies recently issued by the U. S. Census Bureau.

Our tables go over the entire State, county by county and town by town, giving the population, the area, the post offices, the churches, the membership, the current expenses of the churches and the amount of Home Mission aid received. In addition to statistics we have many written descriptions of conditions. All this information depending on voluntary co-operation, it is surprising that our definite returns cover at least 75% of all the church work now being done in Colorado. Substantially we have a conspectus of over 90% of it all.

There are 154 places which are receiving Home Mission aid. The averages in these places are as follows: Population, 3600; number of churches, 3.8—i. e., one church to every 945 people; number of members per church, 121; current expenses per church, \$1,014.45; Home Mission aid for the whole place, \$378.19—i. e., \$10.50 of Home Mission money for every hundred inhabitants.

1. In the clear light of these facts it is seen that sweeping statements about overlapping and the waste of Home Mission money in denominational competition are without adequate foundation—are, in fact, absurdly false. Putting all the Home Mission efforts together, one on top of another, we are contributing towards the religious welfare of each inhabitant an aggregate of one cent every five weeks! That is in the places where we do anything at all. But there are nearly four times as many neighborhoods where no denomination, Catholic or Protestant, is doing anything whatever, either with or without Home Mission aid.

Eleven per cent. of the Home Mission aid goes to fields where there is but one church; 77.8% goes to the strategic centers, the nine largest towns and cities of the State (35.6% to the two largest cities). Nearly 90%, therefore (88.8%), of the Home Mission aid goes either where there is no duplication whatever or to the swiftly growing cities, where the future of the people is pivoted.

This wise distribution of funds in the large must not lead us to overlook some directions in which careful co-ordination of endeavor would enable us to reach fields otherwise deplorably neglected. **There are 133 places ranging in population from 150 to 1000 souls each without Protestant churches of any kind; (100 of these have no Romanist churches either).** There are 428 other communities of sufficient importance to have post offices, but without any churches. Some places have 200 and 300 or more people, with two or three saloons and no church.

There are whole counties with no adequate religious work; San Miguel, with over 5000 people in 12 places and only 3 churches

in the county ; Lake Co., with 4 churches in Leadville, which has 13,000 people ; Las Animas Co., with 11 churches in Trinidad, where there are 14,000 people, but only 4 churches for the 16,000 people, largely Mexican, in all the rest of the county ; Cheyenne Co., a rapidly developing dry farming county with only one church. Of the 60 counties in the State at least 18 appear to be without adequate church work of any kind.

2. On the other hand, there are some places which appear to have more church privileges than are absolutely necessary. Exceptional instances are a town with 400 people and 4 churches receiving \$660 of Home Mission aid, and a town with 300 people and 6 churches, receiving \$530 of such aid.

In view of all the facts, however, the most critical student of the conditions revealed must admit that for every section of the State possibly overprovided with churches there are at least twice as many sections which are certainly underprovided. That much is plain on the fact of the figures. If one could fully measure the deeper historical and psychologic needs of the situation he might conclude that there is at least ten times more overlooking than there is overlapping.

What can be done to correct both errors ? As there is no reason to suppose that Colorado is an exceptional Western State we earnestly recommend immediate, definite action by all our Home Mission Boards to promote more effective co-ordination of effort.

Recommendations.

Guiding Principles.

Recognizing the large degree of interdenominational comity long exercised on Home Mission fields and increasingly so, in order to reinforce our workers in this and to establish the principle throughout the entire field,

The.....(name of Executive Board or Committee) hereby instructs its superintendents of work and all representatives :

I. TO CONFER WITH LIKE OFFICERS OF OTHER HOME MISSION SOCIETIES OR BOARDS AND ARRANGE TO ALLOT THE ENTIRELY UNOCCUPIED FIELDS AMONG THE VARIOUS BODIES, SO THAT EACH SHALL FEEL ESPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR GIVEN FIELDS.*

II. TO DECLINE TO ENDORSE APPLICATIONS FOR HOME MISSION AID IN PLACES WHERE THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS EARNESTLY AND ADEQUATELY PROMULGATED BY OTHERS AND WHERE ASSURED PROSPECTS OF GROWTH DO NOT SEEM TO DEMAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OTHER CHURCHES.*

Executive Measures.

It is understood that the above instructions are not to be in force nor to be issued until adopted by Boards aiding at least two-thirds of the 6066 missionaries west of the Mississippi River, as

*It will be noted that Instruction I does not exclude any one from any field, but merely insures that some one look after every field and that Instruction II has nothing whatever to say about what people in communities may choose to do for themselves, but concerns only the funds of the missionary societies.

reported to the Home Mission Committee of the Federal Council at the end of 1909. Accordingly each Board is to notify the aforesaid Committee as soon as it adopts these recommendations and is to issue them to its representatives as soon as it is notified by the Committee that Boards having the requisite number of missionaries have adopted them. The Committee shall furnish the Boards with a list of all the Boards joining in the instructions, the list to be sent by each Board with the instructions to its State or Territorial supervisor of missions.

It is further understood that in order to secure promptly and as frequently as necessary conferences of the representatives of the co-operating Boards to carry into effect the foregoing instructions the following is adopted:—

(a) Within one month after the instructions are issued the conferences of State or other Territorial supervisors of missions shall convene.

(b) The first conference shall be called together at some convenient place by the representative selected by the Executive Committee of the Home Missions Council.

(c) The first conference in each State or Territory shall choose a secretary who shall keep a record of conclusions reached, notify all conferees of the same and call subsequent meetings whenever two or more deem another conference desirable.

In the nature of the case it is understood that until such times as there may be churches of each one's own persuasion, the existing church or churches in a community will extend every privilege which their convictions allow and all possible courtesies.

By way of explanation it is noteworthy that the application of the two principles (Instructions I and II) just adopted, is peculiarly appropriate in the following spheres of action:—

- (1) In Spanish-speaking fields, in some of which it has long been in force.
- (2) In work for the Indians, where it is in process of adoption.
- (3) In mining and lumbering camps, where the population is especially shifting.
- (4) Among immigrants who do not find in this country already a considerable body of their own nationality in evangelical churches.
- (5) In the congested sections of great cities, where there is no coping with the vast needs except by co-operating.
- (6) In thinly populated rural sections which are not strategic numerically and yet, judging by the past, are the springs of the best life of the nation.
- (7) Experience indicates that Instruction II is likely to find its most frequent application in the smaller towns and villages which have no assurance of large growth.

L. C. Barnes, *Chairman.*

E. B. Sanford, *Secretary.*

Adopted March 16, 1910, by the Joint Committee and recommended to the various Home Mission Boards for action.

Likewise adopted and recommended by the Home Missions Council 1910.

Likewise adopted and recommended by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council 1910.